



Chadashot Ha'am

April, 2012

Nisan/Iyyar

A Message from Rabbi Saks

There is a tale in which King Solomon was presented with a case regarding the inheritance of the sons of a wealthy farmer. The farmer's seven sons came before King Solomon disputing how their father's wealth would be divided among them. The six oldest sons claimed that their father's property should be divided into seven equal parts, one for each son. But there was something unusual about the farmer's youngest son.



He had two heads. He therefore claimed to be two separate people, each of whom was entitled to his own share of one-eighth of the estate. After hearing the sons' case, Solomon thought about it for a night. The next day he put the seventh son to a test. He blindfolded both heads and then, when neither could see what was happening, poured water over one of the heads. When both heads cried out, Solomon had his answer. He decided that they were one person, because, had they been separate people, only the one with water poured over his head would have cried out.

The question that remains with us today is whether we cry out when, metaphorically, water is poured on someone else's head. Not to cry out is not to fulfill the ideals of Judaism. In 1927, Edmond Fleg, having left Judaism and subsequently returned to it, wrote *Why I am a Jew* in which he declared, "I am a Jew because in every place where suffering weeps, the Jew weeps." As we celebrate the holiday of Passover and

commemorate our becoming a free people, we are reminded that, more pressing than any other commandment in Torah, is our obligation to care for the widow, the orphan, and the stranger, specifically

because we were strangers in the land of Egypt and we know the heart of the stranger. In this understanding, we see that, like that seventh son, we are all one person, who cries out when confronted with the suffering of others.

That concern for others, Jews and non-Jews alike, is a cornerstone of the Reform movement. From the inception of our movement, our founders de-emphasized the importance of ritual law and asserted the centrality of social justice. In 1998, Rabbi Eric Yoffie, then president of the Reform movement, wrote, "Reform Jews are committed to social justice. Even as Reform Jews embrace ritual, prayer, and ceremony more than ever, we continue to see social justice as the jewel in the Reform Jewish crown. Like the prophets, we never forget that God is concerned about the everyday and that the blights of society take precedence over the mysteries of heaven. A Reform synagogue that does not alleviate the anguish of the suffering is a contradiction in terms."

Social justice, I believe, is a religious practice. It is not only a cornerstone of our movement, but also a religious obligation. There are those who would say that the separation of church and state demands that we keep our religious voices out of the

public square, but this would only lead to deterioration of that separation. As Rabbi Marla Feldman, the director of our movement's Joint Commission on Social Action writes, "If we don't bring these progressive religious values into the public arena with us, we will abandon the public square to those offering a different view of religion and values."

In recent months, our Social Action Committee has been engaged in efforts to welcome new immigrants to Maine, begun to advocate for asylum seekers, and started the work of ensuring equality for all of Maine's citizens. Our congregation has worked to alleviate the suffering of the poor by supporting Jewish Family Services' Food Pantry, the South Portland Food Cupboard, Wayside Soup Kitchen, and the Preble Street Resource Center.

This is God's work. Our hands are God's hands and we, through our covenantal relationship with God, have a sacred obligation to engage in *tikkun olam*, the repair of our world. Our tradition teaches us that the Messianic Age cannot come until we have done the work of social justice, fixing the broken world in which we live. As we make our way through the Passover experience, recounting our freedom narrative, may we not forget that we are not free if there are others whose lives are still made bitter. When we stand again at Sinai on *Shavuot*, ready to receive the Torah once more, may we remember the sacred responsibility we bear and may we work to make our society more just and more fair.

President's Message - Lisa Pierce

One of my favorite things about being president of Bet Ha'am is working with our Board of Trustees. I know it's hard to imagine anyone getting excited about a Board meeting, but this is one of the most thoughtful and well-intentioned groups I have ever worked with. I greatly appreciate the sense of responsibility each Board member brings to the table and that each Board member voices opinions with respect. Our Board members work together to develop and evaluate policies and respond to issues in ways that best reflect the mission and spirit of Bet Ha'am. And when the path is not obvious, this Board is careful to give matters further consideration and get additional input as needed.

There were two recent conversations that I would like to tell you about this month. The first is the beginning of a conversation on which we need further input, and the second is the continuation of a conversation to which you have already responded.

Over the last few months, our Board has been reviewing how we welcome and include our non-Jewish members as part of our congregation. Providing a supportive home for our interfaith families – who make up approximately three quarters of our membership – is a founding principle of Bet Ha'am and central to our mission. The Board was asked recently to evaluate our policies about the roles that our non-Jewish members could play in the congregation, including teaching and Board service. We discussed these issues thoughtfully over a few Board meetings and ultimately determined that we need further input from the congregation. Please take a few moments to let me or any other Board member know your thoughts. I am happy to collect responses by email at lisa.lisapie@gmail.com. I expect that



we have much more work to do before we take any action and that conversation will continue at the congregational level over the next year.

The second issue before the Board was the proposed resolution in support of marriage equality. The outpouring of support from our members in favor of this resolution has been overwhelming. We extend our thanks to everyone who shared their thoughts with us. Your input was a very valuable part of this process.

At its meeting on February 28, the Board discussed the proposed resolution at length. Ultimately, a slightly amended version of the resolution was unanimously adopted. It reads as follows:

That the Board of Trustees of Congregation Bet Ha'am, recognizing the diversity of views on the subject of LGBT rights among the membership of the Congregation of South Portland, Maine, and honoring each member of our Congregation, encourages a full and respectful discussion of Biblical and halakhic views of marriage and sexuality as understood in the Reform Jewish Tradition; and that the Board of Trustees of Congregation Bet Ha'am, consistent with the principles of Reform Judaism and with the position of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, endorses the proposed Maine Citizens Initiative "An Act To End Discrimination in Civil Marriage and Affirm Religious Freedom."

The change in the wording of the text from the version that I circulated for input reflects the Board's commitment to continuing discussion on this matter

within our congregation and in the broader community. We invite you to the first of several such discussions, a panel discussion entitled "A Rabbi, a Priest, and a Minister . . . How People of Faith Support Marriage Equality." The discussion will be held at Congregation Bet Ha'am on Tuesday, April 3. This event is organized by the Religious Coalition Against Discrimination and Integrity Maine. It will feature the following panelists: Rabbi Carolyn Braun of Temple Beth El, Father Ben Shabaugh, Dean of Cathedral Church of St. Luke, and Reverend Don Rudalevige, Methodist Minister and District Superintendent (retired). Our own Rabbi Saks will moderate the discussion. Everyone is welcome.

If you have any questions or concerns about this matter or about any other congregational business, please contact me or any Board member.

Chadashot Chai-lights

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Congregation Bet Ha'am

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Orly Mendelson Biggie, Religious School Director
 Kris Dorer, Synagogue Administrator
 Teri Berenson, Bookkeeper
 Chris Skidgel, Custodian

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Office Hours:

Tuesday - Friday, 9:00 AM-4:00 PM
 The office is closed on Mondays.
 Building Use: All meetings, events or gatherings
 must be scheduled with the office.

Office extensions and email addresses:

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From the Religious School Director**Orly Mendelson Biggie**

In March, I traveled to San Antonio, Texas for a *kalla* – a study session - with 150 other educators from Reform congregations and education agencies. The *kalla* focused on professional growth for educators and teachers. Most of the presenters were from an organization called Learning Forward that works primarily with secular schools. I was fortunate to spend time, share ideas and learn with many inspiring educators. And I am looking forward to sharing my learning with our teachers.

While we are on the subject of teachers, I will make my annual request for Religious School teachers. Through the years, I have had the pleasure of working with many members who have volunteered to teach in our school. At our recent Purim celebrations, I introduced many of our teachers including Jodi Welch, 2nd grade, who has been with us for fourteen years; Michelle Albahary, 3rd grade, who has been with us for eight years; Trish Wasserman, 3rd grade, and Shana Blotner, 2nd grade, who have been with us for six years; and Martha Ollove, 1st grade, who has been with us for three years. We are grateful to them and to all of our teachers.

Each year, some of our teachers retire and we need to find others who will volunteer to step in. Teaching our children is a rewarding task, and we encourage you to consider joining our faculty. We need both Judaica and Hebrew teachers for both morning (grades one through six) and evening (grades seven through ten) Religious School.

I would be happy to meet with you and explore some options that would work for you. Please give me a call so we can schedule a time to talk about this *mitzvah*.

Schedule of Services

Friday, April 6

Kabbalat Shabbat Service 7:30 PM

Saturday, April 7

Torah Study 9:00 AM

Worship Service 10:00 AM

Parsha Pesach

Friday, April 13

Family Kabbalat Shabbat 6:30 PM

Saturday, April 14

Torah Study 9:00 AM

Worship Service 10:00 AM

Parsha Sh'mini I

Friday, April 20

Kabbalat Shabbat Service 7:30 PM

Saturday, April 21

Torah Study 9:00 AM

Worship Service 10:00 AM

Sam Nemeroff Bar Mitzvah, son of
Stephen & Suzanne Nemeroff

Parsha Sh'mini II

Friday, April 27

Kabbalat Shabbat Service 7:30 PM

Saturday, April 28

Torah Study 9:00 AM

Worship Service 10:00 AM

Noah Goren Bar Mitzvah, son of
David & Kim Goren

Parsha Tazria/M'tzora

**Please join the congregation
in celebration as our students
are called to the Torah as
B'nai Mitzvah.**

Religious School News

Thank you to last month's substitute teachers: Mark Carignan, Russ Pierce and Priya Natarajan.

Model Seders

Religious School will conduct model seders for our students on Sunday morning, April 1. We will not have assembly that morning. Students will begin their day in their classrooms and participate in a model seder for part of their time at Religious School. We will be asking students to bring items for their seder. We also need parents to help with setting up, serving and cleaning up. Please call Orly at 879-0028 if you can help us.

Grades 1-3 will participate in their model seder from 9:30-10:30 AM.

Grades 4-6 will participate in their model seder from 10:45 AM-noon.

Grade 3 and 4 Parent Study Group: Getting Ready for Pesach

On Sunday, April 1, from 9:00 – 10:00 AM, a study group will be held for parents of third and fourth grade students. We hope you will join us!

Purim Thanks

We were fortunate to have many wonderful parents bake many delicious *hamantashen* for our Purim celebration. Thank you to Andrew Steinberg, Dara Saffer, Amy Stanley, Lauren Kropp, Jill Rosenthal, Andy Abrams, Dana Anderson, Cory Kuhl, Joshua Bloom, Lindsay Cadwallader and Beth Lucien.

And thank you to the vendors who supplied prizes for our Teacher Costume Contest: The Leavitt family from Leavitt & Sons, Big Sky Bakery, Eileen Kalikow, Shiraz Biggie from Secret Song Designs, Great Wall Buffet, Maine Jewish Film Festival and Portland Stage.

Time Change for Evening Religious School on April 29

On April 29 students in grades seven through ten will have Religious School from 1:00 – 3:00 PM. We are rescheduling Religious School so that everyone can enjoy the community celebration of *Yom Ha'Atzmaut* (Israel Independence Day) that evening. Join us for the celebration and a performance by the Maccabeats!

It's Time to Register for Religious School for Next Year

We are already gearing up for next year's Religious School and look forward to having your child enrolled in school. We are excited about next year and hope you will decide to register sooner rather than later. The registration forms for the 2012-2013 Religious School year are included in this issue of *Chadashot Ha'am*. If you submit your registration form and the \$25 fee by May 15, you will qualify for our early registration rate. This opportunity is available to all members in good standing, so if you have any questions regarding your current Bet Halam membership, please call the office so that we can welcome your child next fall.

Purim Pics



The Purim Shpiel

Help Us Raise Crops for the South Portland Food Cupboard!

We are proud to announce that Communities Promoting Health Coalition (CPHC) has awarded Bet Ha'am another grant. The grant will support our goals to increase our harvest from our raised garden beds and to donate the additional produce to the South Portland Food Cupboard. The South Portland Food Cupboard is around the corner from Bet Ha'am at St. John's Church.

Our plan is to build another raised bed, add some potato growing sacks, install hoop covers to extend the growing season and plant successive crops to achieve a continuous harvest throughout the season.

Rachel Stamieszkin, who has coordinated the Maine Harvest for Hunger program for the Cape Elizabeth Community Garden, will share her expertise and help coordinate this project. In just three years Maine Harvest for Hunger donated more than 1000 pounds of produce to area food pantries!

We need lots of volunteers to help us meet our goals. Here are some ways you can help.

- ◆ Work on specific projects, such as building the new raised bed and installing the hoop covers.
- ◆ Tend the garden for about an hour a week.
- ◆ Harvest and deliver crops.
- ◆ Share your vegetable gardening expertise with other volunteers.
- ◆ Volunteer for our community garden for a bar/bat mitzvah project, community service requirement for school or scouts, healthy family activity, learning opportunity that will enhance your own vegetable garden or to explore Jewish values and social action.

Toby and Rachel promise this will be a rewarding experience!
For more information, contact the Bet Ha'am office.

Social Action Committee News

If you are interested in getting involved in the marriage equality campaign, here are some ways you can help.

- Attend Equality Maine's monthly meeting on April 4 at 6:00 PM at the Equality Maine office, 550 Forest Avenue, Suite 201, Portland.
- Volunteer for an Equality Maine phone bank to share information or to recruit volunteers. If you'd like to volunteer with others from Bet Ha'am, contact Jill Rosenthal at jrosenthal@nashp.org.
- Volunteer to do face-to-face recruitment.
- Volunteer to do data entry and other office tasks.
- Write letters to the editor.
- Write letters in support of marriage equality.

For more information, please contact Jacob Wolk (jwolk@equalitymaine.org) or call 207-761-3732.

The Social Action Committee will meet on April 8 at 10:00 AM and on May 9 at 5:30 PM at Bet Ha'am. All are welcome.



Garden Committee

Save these Dates!

**Get To Know the Garden - Sunday, April 29,
9:00 AM to noon**

The Garden Committee will provide information, snacks, and tours of the sanctuary, wheat, and raised bed gardens.

**3rd Annual Plant Sale and Garden Tours –
Sunday, May 13, 9:00 AM to noon**

The Garden Committee will offer tours of the gardens and explain how interested individuals can help with our gardening work.

Efrog Project Update

Thank you to Orly Biggie and Rosie Wohl for donating their *etrogs* after *Sukkot* last fall. Their *etrog* seeds were planted at our *Tu b'Shevat* seder and have sprouted! We have 50 seedlings, and new green shoots pop their heads out of the soil daily. The Garden Committee will sell the extra seedlings at our Annual Plant Sale on Sunday, May 13. Imagine growing your own *etrog* tree indoors!



Adult Education

Thursday Night Mini-Series - April 26, May 3 & May 10 at 7:00

Join us for our second Thursday night mini-series later this spring! People who came to our fall mini-series know it was great fun: a chance to chat before the sessions started and three options for programs to attend. This spring we will have four new programs going simultaneously.

Sultry Jewish Stories: Tales Your Hebrew School Teacher Would Have Been Fired for Teaching. In the book of Esther, what was a nice Jewish girl doing sleeping with the King anyway? Did she enjoy it? The biblical text paints Jonathan and David as best of friends. Was there more to their relationship? Come join us for what will not be your Hebrew School teacher's lesson plan. *Rabbi Saks*

Healing Shawls: Congregants are knitting shawls for Hospice patients. Join other knitters, or come learn to knit, as we work together on this *mitzvah* project. Rosie Wohl will speak about the project and Jane Snerson will tell one of her famous stories. Bring knitting needles and yarn if you have them, or needles will be available to use. You can join the group for one, two or all three sessions. *Donna Landau*

Ten Gates to Jewish Mysticism: An introduction to the principles of *Kabbalah* using stories, texts, and meditations with the goal of exploring the ten *Sephirot* and their relevance in Jewish prayer, philosophy, and psychology. *Steve Steinbock*

Gluten-free Cooking: Learn new recipes and have fun cooking. Whether your diet is gluten free or not, you will enjoy this cooking class! *Emily Brocks*

Rachael Freed: Scholar in Residence Weekend - May 18-20

Legacy, Jubilee and Jewish Values in Today's World. Join us to celebrate and express our Jewish values through legacy. Based on an ancient tradition begun by our patriarch Jacob, we'll explore legacy and its practical applications to our personal and communal lives in the modern world. Our legacies link us to our history, give purpose to our daily lives, and preserve our blessings and love for future generations.

Mikvat Shalom

Do you know there is a *mikvah* in Portland? Do you know what a *mikvah* is and why Reform Jews should be interested in learning about it? A representative from the committee that manages the Portland *mikvah*, *Mikvat Shalom*, will be speaking at Bet Ha'am on a Wednesday night this spring. Watch for details!

Don't miss Congregation Bet Ha'am's

Annual Plant Sale



Sunday, May 13
9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Great deals on plants!

All proceeds are used to support our gardens.

To volunteer or for more information about donating plants, contact
Joan Caldwell at jdcaldwell32@gmail.com
or Beth Simpson at bethjsimpson@yahoo.com

Bet Ha'am Religious School Registration Form 2012-2013 (5773)

We look forward to having your child(ren) in Religious School next year. Please return your completed registration form as soon as possible and include a **non-refundable \$25.00** registration fee for each child. This fee will be deducted from your school fee balance. The balance is due by September 1. If you teach full-time in Religious School, the school fee (but not the dinner fee) is waived.

Classes meet as follows: Grade K: Two Sundays each month (The fee is half of the amount below.)

Grades 1-6: Sundays, 9:00 AM - noon

Grades 7-10: Sundays, 5:00 - 7:30 PM (Add \$120 dinner fee to the amount below.)

Fees for Grades K-10	Register by 5/15	Register between 5/16 and 8/16	Register after 8/16
1st child	\$320.00	\$360.00	Add \$50 late fee
2nd child	\$220.00	\$260.00	Add \$50 late fee
Each Add'l child	\$195.00	\$235.00	Add \$50 late fee

1) Student's name _____ Hebrew name _____
Date of birth _____ Entering grade _____ at _____ School.

2) Student's name _____ Hebrew name _____
Date of birth _____ Entering grade _____ at _____ School.

3) Student's name _____ Hebrew name _____
Date of birth _____ Entering grade _____ at _____ School.

**Please complete the information below if your child(ren) will be new to our Religious School
or if there have been any recent changes.**

Home address, city and zip _____ Home Phone: _____

Parent#1 _____ email _____ Work Phone: _____

Religion _____ Occupation _____ Mobile _____

Parent#2 _____ email _____ Work Phone: _____

Religion _____ Occupation _____ Mobile _____

Does a parent read Hebrew? _____

Do you need school information sent to two addresses? If yes, please enter the second address:

Are there medical conditions or needs of which the school should be aware?

Are there any special educational needs of which the school should be aware?

Emergency contact: _____ Phone _____

I am enclosing an additional \$ _____ toward scholarships for students in need.

We always need teachers, both Hebrew and Judaica, both morning and evening sessions. Are you interested? __Y __N

Students' photos and quotes may be used for publicity purposes. ___I prefer my child's photos and quotes **not** be used for publicity purposes.

Please return your registration with fees to 81 Westbrook St., South Portland, ME 04106 by May 15, 2012

Join the Bet Ha'am Donor Gallery

We invite you to join the Bet Ha'am Donor Gallery today! We have many needs and many ways for you to contribute. If you have an event you would like to celebrate, a person you would like to honor, a *yahrzeit* to remember, or you just want to help support our programs, please fill out the form and send it along with your check to Bet Ha'am. Include an address if you would like an acknowledgement to be sent.

Our Donor Gallery listing should read:

Please acknowledge to: _____

Your name: _____

Check enclosed for \$ _____

Fund choice (please check one):

- ☐ General Fund
- ☐ Sandmel Education Fund
- ☐ Building Capital Campaign
- ☐ Berkowitz Open Door Fund
- ☐ Rabbi's Discretionary Fund
- ☐ Youth Fund
- ☐ Cohen Fund for Worship & Learning
- ☐ Religious School Library Fund
- ☐ Adult Library Fund
- ☐ Rosalyn S. & Sumner T. Bernstein
- ☐ Scholar in Residence Fund
- ☐ Tutor Fund

Bet Ha'am Donor Gallery

We thank our generous contributors

Annual Fund

- In memory of Shirley R. Lerman by Carl Lerman
- Nathan & Sarah Szanton

Capital Campaign

- In appreciation by Gina Lane Easley
- In memory of Virginia Kittle and Martin B. Moser on their *yahrzeits* by Jeremy Moser & Laura Kittle
- In memory of Marc Goldsmith by Jeremy Moser & Laura Kittle
- In memory of Robert Satter, Shoshana Hoose's father, by Jeremy Moser & Laura Kittle
- In memory of Teri Berenson's father by Jeremy Moser & Laura Kittle
- In memory of Shirley Goodman on her *yahrzeit* by Wayne & JoAnn Miller Goodman
- In memory of Ruthie Finn on her *yahrzeit* by Wayne & JoAnn Miller Goodman
- In loving memory of Diane, Joseph and Alan Ravitch on their *yahrzeits* by Lee & Jamie Broder

Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

- With thanks to Rabbi Saks by Lee & Jamie Broder

General Fund

- In honor of Ray Spiro as he celebrates his 85th birthday by Ginger Spiro
- In appreciation by a friend
- In memory of Lewis Rosenthal on his *yahrzeit* by Robert & Rona Rosenthal
- In celebration of Ray Spiro on his 85th birthday by Jane Snerson
- In honor of the Purim *Megillah* readers by Rachel & Piotr Stamieszkin

Religious School Library Fund

- In appreciation by Gina Lane Easley

Sandmel Education Fund

- In honor of Henry Wasserman becoming Bar Mitzvah by Rachel & Piotr Stamieszkin

Mazel Tov

Toby Rosenberg's wedding cake toppers are featured in the spring issue of Jewish Woman magazine, which will be available in April. Congratulations!

Zecher T'zaddik L'vrachah

- Condolences to Eleanor Goldberg on the loss of her mother, Irma Goldberg

April 2012

Sun

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thu

Fri

Sat

1 Religious School Model Seders 3rd & 4th grade parents Study Group 9:00-10:00 AM	2 Office Closed	3 "A Rabbi, A Priest, and a Minister ..." 7:00 PM	4 Morning <i>Minyan</i> 7:00 AM Senior Passover Luncheon 12:00-2:00 PM	5	6 <i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i> Service 5:00 PM First Night Passover Congregational Seder 5:30 PM	7 Torah Study 9:00 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM Matzah Brei Cookoff after services
8 Social Action Committee 10:00 AM	9 Office Closed	10	11 Morning <i>Minyan</i> 7:00 AM	12	13 Family <i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i> Service 6:30 PM	14 Torah Study 9:00 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM
15	16 Office Closed	17	18 Morning <i>Minyan</i> 7:00 AM	19	20 <i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i> Service 7:30 PM	21 Torah Study 9:00 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM Sam Nemeroff, Bar Mitzvah Women's Minyan Seder 3:00 PM
22	23 Office Closed	24	25 Morning <i>Minyan</i> 7:00 AM	26 Adult Education Mini-Series 7:00 PM	27 <i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i> Service 7:30 PM	28 Torah Study 9:00 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM Noah Goren, Bar Mitzvah
29 Get to Know the Garden 9:00-12:00 noon Evening School 1:00-3:00 PM <i>Yom Ha'Atzmaut</i> (Israel Independence Day) with the Maccabees!	30 Office Closed					